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MI5 SECRETS 'SPURNED BY THE KGB'

Spy was left out in the cold, says QC

By IAN HENRY Old Bailey Correspondent

THE KGB turned down the chance of acquiring a hoard of British secrets by totally ignoring three offers from a disillusioned MI5 man to spy for them, an Old Bailey jury was told yesterday.

Michael Bettaney, a middle-ranking counter-espionage agent, was said to have made three midnight visits to the London home of a Russian Embassy official to deliver letters offering his services.

Two of the letters included copies of secret papers, the Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers, QC, told the trial. But the Russian, whom Bettaney believed was a senior KGB man, made no attempt to develop the contact.

Bettaney was about to fly to Vienna to try his luck with the KGB there when he was arrested, said Sir Michael.

Too secret for

Havens to see

And it was only when Special Branch men searched his home in Coulsdon, Surrey, that they found the hoard of documents which the Kremlin had spurned.

Sir Michael said that some of the material is so sensitive that it will not be shown to the jury. "Indeed, I have not even seen it myself."

"You will appreciate that there are certain matters which it simply cannot be in the national interest to pass round, even to me."

Loss of these documents to the Russians would have done grave damage to the nation.

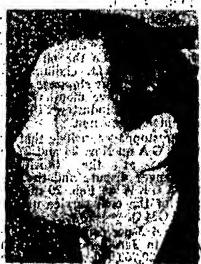
But Sir Michael said the jury would be able to see some material, including the "Russian order of battle in London."

The trial of Bettaney—said by Sir Michael to have been ready to spy because of ideological, not financial, reasons—is being held amid secrecy unprecedented in English peace-time legal history.

Following a 38-minute outline in public by Sir Michael, the hearing continued in camera with Press and public excluded.

The rest of the trial, expected to last about a week, will be held in secret.

The court is locked, and the



Michael Bettaney
A plump-faced 33-year-old Oxford graduate who was in the security services for eight years, denies 10 charges

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of offering his services to the Russians, planning a dead letter-box delivery system, and copying secrets.

Flanked in the dock by three prison officers, he made occasional notes, peering through wire-rimmed glasses, during Sir Michael's opening statement.

He is the first MI5 man ever to be brought to trial on spying charges. No case has been heard in such secrecy since the

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SECRETS

By IAN HENRY

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Traitor George Blake was jailed in 1961 at the Old Bailey.

The Attorney-General said Bettaney made three visits last spring and summer to the home of Andrei Vasilievich Gouk, who was a first secretary at the Soviet Embassy.

The first letter he left said he had information which would be of special interest to the central committee of the KGB.

As well as including secrets, he gave details of a complicated dead letter-box system to be used for the deliveries of further classified information.

If the Russians were interested, they were to leave a drawing pin in a certain bannister rail at Piccadilly Tube station.

Sir Michael said that in response, Bettaney would wrap adhesive tape round a phone cable in a specified call-box off Oxford Street to signify that he was ready.

He would then leave a film canister taped to the lid of the cistern in the gents' lavatory at the Academy Cinema in Oxford Street.

An alternative system involved leaving a stick in a bus timetable on a stop in Holland Park Avenue, and secrets left in a Carlsberg lager can beside a lamp-post in Greenford. The Russians were to signal receipt by leaving orange peel outside a park near Euston station.

But, the jury was told, the Russians gave no sign of interest. Even when Bettaney—according to Sir Michael—phoned Gouk at a pre-arranged time, nobody answered.

DENIAL BY RUSSIANS

So-called' case

Our DIPLOMATIC STAFF writes: The Soviet Embassy yesterday emphatically denied that any of its employees had ever had any form of contact with Bettaney.

A statement said: "The Soviet Embassy categorically rejects any insinuation with regard to the so-called Bettaney case, and strongly states that none of the Soviet officials knew Bettaney, nor got in touch with him, or received any materials from him."

"An attempt by some circles to link the so-called Bettaney case with the Soviet Embassy has obviously been provoked by ill-intentioned purposes and is aimed at damaging the normal development of the Soviet-British relations."